



Moving On Up With MEPD

Spring 2011

WELCOME TO “Moving on Up with MEPD”

MEPD (Medicaid for Employed People with Disabilities) allows you to earn money for work and maintain your savings in the bank, which would normally put you over the limit to receive Medicaid. This newsletter is sent to all MEPD members.

You get **Medicaid for Employed People with Disabilities (MEPD)** because you:

- Have a disability.
- Are earning money from work.
- Are under 65 years old.

Remember, these things you need to tell your local DHS Income Maintenance Worker:

- When you stop working.
- When you earn more money.
- When you earn less money.
- When you move to a new address.

WORKING FOR YOU!

by SueAnn Morrow

Three groups in Iowa are trying to make it easier for people with disabilities to get what they need to find work. One is called **Employment First**. Its goal is to begin to get everyone to think “Employment First”. When planning, everyone should be thinking about employment in the community instead of segregated settings or “pre-voc” programs. Services and supports work better when done in real community job settings. This group wants everyone thinking about work!

The second group, **Alliance for Full Participation (AFP)**, has a goal to double the number of people with developmental disabilities who are working by the year 2015. This group is different from **Employment First** as it focuses only on people with developmental disabilities.

The third one is the **State Employment Leadership Network (SELN)**. The Division of Mental Health and Disabilities Services now belongs to a national group of State Disabilities Agencies working to increase the employment for individuals with disabilities who receive services through Medicaid or any waivers. This group works on employment issues/policies at the state and national level.

In summary, we are lucky in Iowa. We have the **Employment First** group focusing on getting people to ask for community employment. We have the **Alliance for Full Participation** that gives us a clear goal to work toward and the **State Employment Leadership Network** to work on state issues. With all three working on employment, we will make changes.

For more information about Iowa’s Employment First initiative

contact SueAnn Morrow at: samorrow@hughes.net

CCO—Consumer Choices Option: Iowa's "Self Direction" Option

The Consumer Choices Option offers Iowans the choice of taking the responsibility for planning and controlling Home- and Community-Based Services to make it possible for them to stay in their homes and communities. It provides an option for those who need care or assistance due to aging, illness or disability.

The Consumer Choices Option recognizes that Iowans with disabilities and older Iowans can plan and decide how they spend their days and how they live their lives, with caring assistance available when needed. It is offered through Iowa's Home- and Community-Based (HCBS) Waiver programs, allowing individuals and their families to make decisions about the services they need and to manage those services. It:

- Offers flexibility so individuals can get assistance for the support needed in the lifestyles they choose;
- Gives individuals the say-so to determine their own needs, create support plans, make choices, select and employ staff, and monitor the quality of support services;
- Offers support to organize resources in ways that are life enhancing and meaningful to the individual;
- Gives Iowans with disabilities and older Iowans authority over a targeted amount of dollars;
- Promotes responsibility for the wise use of public dollars and recognition of the contribution that individuals with disabilities and older adults make in their communities.

How do people with disabilities or older Iowans get help to buy or direct their own services through the Consumer Choices Option?

1. If you are not currently using Home- and Community-Based Waiver Services (HCBS), you can call your local Department of Human Services (DHS) office or your local County Central Point of Coordination (CPC) Coordinator to determine your eligibility for HCBS funding—your gateway to the Consumer Choices Option.
2. Iowa Medicaid Enterprise Member Services can help you find your local DHS office number or local CPC Coordinator. Iowa Medicaid Enterprise Member Services can be reached by calling 1-800-338-8366 (toll free) or at 515-725-1003 in the local Des Moines area. They are there to help you to get services and explain how services can be provided. You may also check their website at <http://www.ime.state.ia.us>. You can also find the telephone numbers for your local DHS office or County CPC in your phone book.
3. If you are already using Home- and Community-Based Services, a case manager/service worker will meet with you, your family and/or your advocates.
4. Once you are determined eligible for HCBS and decide you want the Consumer Choices Option, your

case manager/service worker will work with you to determine how much money you can spend each month based on your needs.

The case manager/service worker will use information from your service plan and review your history using services to determine your monthly allowance.

Where does your monthly allowance come from?

The Iowa Department of Human Services (DHS) receives money for services from: the State of Iowa, the federal government and the local government. There are many rules and regulations connected with different funding sources.

The first step to direct your own services is choosing an Independent Support Broker.

Choosing an Independent Support Broker is important and can be a big job. Sometimes it is easier to make important decisions when you have help.

Your Independent Support Broker will help develop a plan with you. You are encouraged to ask others who you trust to help. This might include your family, friends, neighbors, co-employees, paid professionals or your personal network of support. Together, you will also discuss ideas for implementing your plan and changing it when necessary.

The second step is to develop your Individual Budget.

Your Individual Budget will document your support needs and priorities. It will describe the things that maintain and improve your quality of life. During the planning process, you and others will decide how to arrange these supports in a way that meets your needs. Everyone's Individual Budget is different. One person may choose to purchase support entirely from agencies that specialize in helping people with disabilities or older adults. Another may choose a combination of traditional provider agencies or non-traditional provider agencies such as hiring a co-worker to be a job coach or a neighbor to help you with housekeeping. You may decide not to utilize agency support, but instead hire your own staff. The only limitation to choosing support is to stay within your monthly allowance determined by the case manager/service worker.

After you select an Independent Support Broker and your initial Individual Budget is written, it is time to figure out who will provide the supports described in your plan.

The person-centered planning process will create many ideas about how the supports can be carried out. Your Independent Support Broker will help you put your plan into action. Think creatively about goods and services that you may purchase through your Individual Budget!



Would you like to make a difference in someone's life in your community?

Are you resourceful?

Are you a good communicator?

If you answered YES to any of the above, you should consider becoming an Independent Support Broker (ISB). As an ISB, you would work for people with disabilities or older lowans who want to use an allowance of public funds to purchase their own supports and services. You would be the key element to help them live their life according to their own personal aspirations and preferences. You would help them design a personal budget for their services, hire their own workers and make any future adjustments to their budget. For each of your clients, you could work approximately 20-26 hours per year for up to \$15.15 per hour and would be considered an independent contractor.

This program for Medicaid waiver consumers is called Consumer Choices Option. More information is available at: www.ime.state.ia.us/HCBS/HCBSConsumerOptions.html. Training is available at no cost. The training sessions provide hands-on experience and information about finding and working with clients. You must be 18 or older and be able to pass background checks.

Training is limited to the first 25 applicants per class. You must attend all training sessions at the location you have signed up for and complete the necessary assignments to become a certified Independent Support Broker.

The next training session will be held: May 25, and 26, 2011 5:30 p.m.-9:00 p.m. each day

Registration must be submitted by May 1st 2011

At the following locations:

<u>ClearLake</u>	<u>DesMoines</u>	<u>Rockwell City</u>	<u>Waterloo</u>
Area Education Agency 267 Regional Office - Clear Lake	Saydel High School	Rockwell City-Lytton High School	Hawkeye Community College - 1
9184B 265th Street	5601 NE 7TH ST Des Moines	1000 W Tonawanda Ave	1501 E. Orange Road
Room Loca- tion: State Room	Room Number: 300	Room Number: 13	Room Number: 110 Room Location: Tama Hall

To register for the Independent Support Broker training, please email Denise Pottorff at dpottor@dhs.state.ia.us or call at 515-256-4655. Make sure you include the name of person(s) attending, mailing address, phone number and/or cell phone (in case of cancellation) and email address.

Please note that if we do not have at least 4 people in each training session, we may need to cancel the session and combine the trainees with a session at another site.

If you have any questions about becoming an Independent Support Broker, please email Denise Pottorff at dpottor@dhs.state.ia.us or call at 515-256-4655.

Upcoming ISB trainings are scheduled for: August 30 and 31 2011 located at Des Moines, Council Bluffs, Waterloo and West Union. October 26th and 27th 2011 located at Clinton, Des Moines, Ottumwa and Waterloo.

Dates and Locations are subject to change.

CCO-Consumer Choice Option cont. from page 2

Here are a few ideas about what you may purchase that could help you...

- Hire individuals, including family members and friends, to provide you with personal assistance.
- Assistance with bathing through a home care agency or an individual.
- Background checks for your possible employees.
- Liability insurance as it relates to your role as employer.
- Training that enables your employees to deliver services with high levels of quality. Training may be purchased from a variety of sources.
- Chore services, including outside chores that provide for a safe environment and access in and out of your home.
- Cleaning services from firms or individuals.
- Food preparation and delivery of prepared foods.
- Transportation services.
- Home modifications such as ramps and grab bars, installation of visual or tactile alarms as well as wander alarms and other modifications.
- Supplies and equipment that promote or enhance independence such as shower chairs, dressing devices, special tooth brush, etc.

For additional information on the Consumer Choices Option, please visit:

<http://www.ime.state.ia.us/HCBS/HCBSConsumerOptions.html>

Ask the Expert—Q: *I've heard something about a new Social Security research study that helps people get back to work: do you know anything about this?*

A: Yes; The Benefit Offset National Demonstration (BOND) is a project created to help Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) beneficiaries return to work. Many SSDI beneficiaries worry about losing their cash benefits if they earn too much money. BOND is designed to help eliminate this problem and will help participants who want to earn more, keep more of their SSDI income. The program will last 5 years and will give some beneficiaries in selected geographic locations the chance to return to work or earn more than they do now.

The purpose of the BOND project is to determine the effect of various interventions, in combination with a benefit offset, on employment outcomes including wages, benefits, hours worked, and job retention. Under current Social Security Disability program rules, people earning more than \$12,000 per year (after their Trial Work Period) generally have their benefits stopped. Under the BOND project, benefits will be reduced \$1 for every \$2 in earnings above

\$12,000 over Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA) levels, once the worker has exhausted both their trial work period and their three month grace period.

Many Americans with disabilities make valuable contributions to the U.S. workforce every day. The SSA is evaluating the BOND project to help more people return to work and earn more, helping them take steps toward a better quality of life. Participating states/areas are; Alabama, Arizona/Southeast California, Colorado/Wyoming, DC Metro, Detroit, Greater Houston, Northern New England, South Florida, Western New York and Wisconsin. The start/enrollment date will be January 2011 through September 2012.

For more information about the BOND project visit their website at: <http://www.bondssa.org/> or call toll free at: 1-877-726-6309.

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People with disabilities, advocates, policy administrators, employers, and medical professionals working together to enhance opportunities for Iowans with disabilities to work and live as they choose.